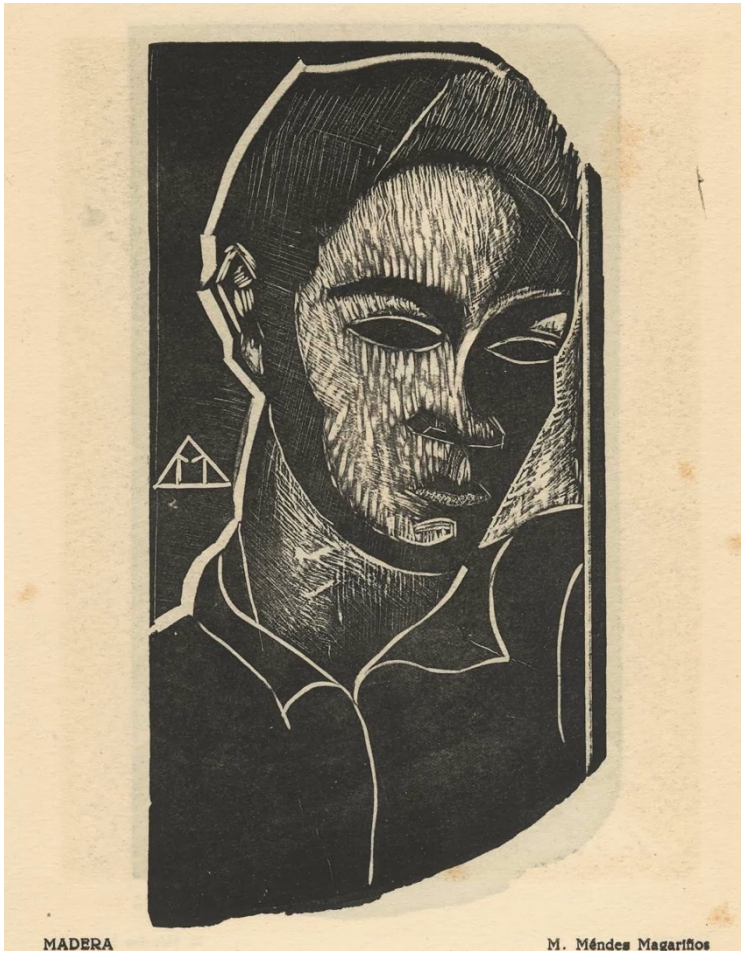
Poetry



Etching of Isidore Ducasse from a family photograph.

Isidore Ducasse

Poetry

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Edited by Karl Orend

Cover art: Imogene Pruitt-Spence

Alyscamps Press, Paris

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Imogene Pruitt-Spence gave the cover the splendid and resonant artwork Ducasse deserves.

CSL

Poetry

Introduction

Poésies I & II (1870) is the only work that Isidore Ducasse, far better known by his pseudonym Comte de Lautréamont, published under his own name. It seems from Ducasse's comments in the colophon that he intended to continue with additional remarks on poetry but within a few months of their publication, Ducasse was dead at the age of 24.

In 1869, a year before the publication of *Poésies*, the complete *Les Chants de Maldoror* was issued. While neither work was particularly noticed upon publication, a reissue of *Maldoror* in 1874 did attract some attention. Novelist and critic Léon Bloy, in 1886, wrote in his book *Le Désespéré* about the:

"…recent intrusion into France of a monster of a book, almost unknown so far, although published in Belgium ten years ago: the *Chants de Maldoror*, by

the Comte de Lautréamont (?), a work quite without analogue and probably destined to resound. The author died in a shed, and this is all that is known about him."

A decade later, poet and critic Rémy de Gourmont included an essay on Lautréamont in his 1896 collection *Le Livre des Masques*. De Gourmont is quick to label Ducasse as "a young man of savage and unexpected originality, a diseased genius and, quite frankly, a mad genius," but also notes that *Maldoror* is "a magnificent, almost inexplicable stroke of genius." He was also drawn to *Poésies,* but missed its intent:

"Several months before his death, he composes the *Poésies*, where, among very curious passages, is revealed the state of mind of a dying man who repeats, while disfiguring them in fever, his most distant memories, that is to say, for his youth and the lessons of his teachers!"

Had it not been for the Surrealists, Ducasse would likely have been relegated to a curiosity, and buried in a literary unmarked grave. But what they discovered in Lautréamont would alter and expand and codify both the *Chants* and *Poésies* as seminal works of the imagination. In essence, their fervor propelled Ducasse/Lautréamont onto the world literary stage.

Their discovery came about this way: In 1917 Phillipe Soupault unearthed a copy of *Maldoror*, misfiled under Mathematics, in a bookshop near the military hospital where he was convalescing from wounds suffered in the first World War. He describes his awe:

"I began reading by the light of a candle. It was an enlightenment. In the morning I read the *Chants* again, certain that I had dreamed the text…. The day after, André Breton came to visit me. I gave him the book and asked him to read it. The following day he brought it back, as enthused as I had been."

Breton's enthusiasm was such that he began searching for other Lautréamont titles. He and Louis Aragon were rewarded the following year

when they discovered a copy of *Poésies* in the Bibliothèque Nationale. Breton copied each word by hand. A month later, in April and May 1919, they republished *Poésies* in their newly launched magazine *Littérature.* With this, and the publication a year later of *Poésies* in book form, with an introduction by Soupault, Ducasse was suddenly on the map, albeit a limited one. But the elevation of Isidore into the Surrealist pantheon would continue unabated. In the first *Manifeste du Surréalisme* (1924) Breton wrote:

"With *Les Chants de Maldoror* Surrealism was born. Older examples can only be traced back to the time of prophets and oracles."

In 1925 the Surrealist magazine *Le Disque Vert* was dedicated to Lautréamont, under the title "Le cas Lautréamont." Two years later Soupault and Breton published *Maldoror* for the world to witness. Within months Lautréamont became not just a patron saint for the Surrealists, but a newly installed fixture in French Literature, earning a place next to Rimbaud, Baudelaire, and Sade. Even those distant from the Surrealist circle, such as André Gide, who wrote an introduction to "Le Cas Lautréamont," took notice.

That attention and reverence accorded *Maldoror* is totally understandable—it is a resonant masterpiece—but *Poésies I & II* also have significant merit. Unlike the highly-charged and dramatic *Maldoror*, *Poésies* are on the surface a non-sequential series of aphorisms pretending to proclaim the importance of goodness, along with scattershot short dogmatic assertions, primarily about writers and writing. This form led some critics and readers to feel that the book was a repudiation of *Les Chants*. It is not.

Indeed, *Poésies* are as duplicitous as they could possibly be. Nothing is actually as it appears, including the often-twisted quotations and/or plagiarisms of French literary giants, most notably Pascal and Vauvenargues. These citations, in fact, often end up pointing in the opposite direction from what the original authors intended. To put the message simply: As language can be distorted to say anything, never believe that what you are reading is

true. This same "commentary" runs through *Maldoror*, coming to a fruition of sorts in Canto VI.

Mark Polizzotti in his brilliant *Lautréamont Nomad* (Alyscamps Press, 1994, pp.42-43) sums up the links to *Maldoror* incisively:

> [T]he *Poésies* are, with respect to *Maldoro*r both a continuation and another side of the same argument—not a philosophical about-face…. For the *Poésies* can be read two ways—*must* be read two ways for the importance lies in this duality. One is as a massive intertext, a mechanism of pure negation and disappearance. But behind this negation, we find the same search, the same movement as in *Maldoror*, which is revealed in the space of the *Poésies* taken without external reference, as a work unto itself: the search for lucidity, for cold reason, a movement against the stupid suffering and blind glorification of abject morality…"

While *Poésies I & II* can stand alone, they also point back explicitly and implicitly to *Maldoror*. Both works are in no small degree about language itself, and the perfidy of the written word with its capacity for untrustworthiness, ambiguity, and deceit.

Christopher Sawyer-Lauçanno

Turners Falls

A Note on the Translation

In translating Ducasse, I have attempted to preserve *Poésies* as written, to allow his prosaic *Poetry* to emerge in English with the original ambiguity and parody in place within his often-convoluted syntax.

--Christopher Sawyer-Lauçanno

Poetry

Previously unknown photograph of Isidore Ducasse
outside a bookshop on the rue Vivienne, in Paris.

To Georges DAZET, Henri MUE, Pedro ZUMARAN, Louis DURCOUR, Joseph BLEUMSTEIM, Joseph DURAND;

To my classmates LESPÈS, Georges MINVIELLE, Auguste DELMAS;

To the Directors of Reviews, Alfred SIRCOS, Frédéric DAMÉ;

To FRIENDS past, present and future;

To Monsieur HINSTIN, my former professor of rhetoric;

are dedicated, once and for all, the prosaic pieces I shall write in the course of the ages, and of which the first is beginning to see the light today, typographically speaking.

I replace melancholy with work, doubt with certainty, despair with hope, wickedness with good, complaints with duty, skepticism with faith, sophistry with the coldness of calm and arrogant pride with modesty.

I

The poetic groans of this century are only sophistry.

First principles must be removed from discussion.

I accept Euripides and Sophocles; but I do not accept Aeschylus.

Do not demonstrate a lack of the most elementary proprieties and bad taste towards the creator.

Repel disbelief: you will please me.

There are not two genres of poetry; there is only one.

There isn't much of a tacit agreement between the author and the reader, by which the first calls himself sick, and accepts the second as nurse.

It is the poet who consoles humanity! The roles are arbitrarily reversed.

I don't want to be branded a poser.

I will leave no memoirs.

Poetry is no more of a storm than it is a cyclone. It is a majestic and fertile river.

It is only by admitting the night physically that we have succeeded in making it amoral. O Young's *Night Thoughts*! So many headaches you have given me!

We only dream when we sleep. Words like those in a dream, nothingness of life, earthly passage, the preposition perhaps, the disordered tripod, which have infiltrated into your souls this clammy poetry of languor, similar to rot. It is only one step from words to ideas.

Disturbances, anxieties, depravities, death, exceptions within the physical or moral order, the spirit of negation, stupefaction, hallucinations served by the will, torments, destruction, reversals, tears, insatiability, enslavement, voided imaginations, novels, what is unexpected, what should not be done, chemical singularities of a mysterious vulture which keeps an eye out for the carrion of some dead illusion, precocious and abortive experiences, bedbug-shelled obscurities, terrible monomaniacal obsession with pride,

inoculation of profound stupors, funeral orations, envies, betrayals, tyrannies, impieties, irritations, acrimonies, aggressive infractions, madness, spleen, reasoned terrors, strange anxieties which the reader would prefer not to experience, grimaces, neuroses, bloody channels through which logic is forced to pass at bay, exaggerations, lack of sincerity, saws, platitudes, darkness, lugubrious, births worse than murder, passions, the clan of high court novelists, tragedies, odes, melodramas, extremes presented in perpetuity, reason whistled away with impunity, stink of wet chicken, loss of taste, frogs, octopuses, sharks, the desert simoom, whatever is somnambulant, sleazy, nocturnal, sleep potion, night owl, slimy, speaking seal, equivocal, consumptive, spasmodic, aphrodisiac, anemic, one-eyed, hermaphrodite, bastard, albino, pederast, aquarium phenomenon and bearded woman, drunken hours of taciturn dejection, fantasies, acridities, monsters, demoralizing syllogisms, garbage, that which does not think like a child, desolation, this intellectual manchineel, scented cankers, thighs like camellias, the guilt of a writer who rolls down the slope of nothingness and despises himself with joyous cries, remorse, hypocrisies, vague perspectives which crush you in their imperceptible gears, seriously spitting on the sacred axioms, the vermin and their insinuating tickles, the insane prefaces like those of Cromwell, Mademoiselle de Maupin and Dumas *fils*, caducity, impotence, blasphemy, asphyxiation, fits, rages—in the face of these filthy graves, which I blush to name, it is time to finally react against what shocks us and makes us bow down as if before a king.

Your mind is perpetually swept off its hinges, and caught in the snare of darkness crudely crafted by selfishness and self-love.

Taste is the fundamental quality that sums up all the other qualities. It is the *nec plus ultra* of the intelligence. It is only through this alone that genius is the supreme health and the balance of all the faculties. Villemain is thirty-four times smarter than Eugène Sue and Frédéric Soulié. His preface to the *Dictionary of the Academy* will mean the death of the novels of Walter Scott, of Fenimore Cooper, of all possible and imaginable novels. The novel is a false genre, because it describes the passions just for themselves: the moral conclusion

is absent. To describe the passions is nothing; it is enough to be born a little bit jackal, a little bit vulture, a little bit panther. We don't want that. To describe them, to submit them to a higher morality, like Corneille, is something else. He who abstains from doing the former while remaining capable of admiring and understanding those gifted enough to do the latter, surpasses, with all the superiority of virtues over vices, the one who does the former.

That a school teacher says to himself: "Even if I had been given all the treasures of the universe, I would not like to have written novels like those of Balzac and Alexandre Dumas." By that alone, he is smarter than Alexandre Dumas and Balzac. If a pupil has absorbed the awareness that one should not call out physical and intellectual deformities, by this alone, he is stronger, more capable, more intelligent than Victor Hugo, had he only written novels, dramas and letters.

Alexandre Dumas *fils* will never, ever give a speech at a school award ceremony. He does not know what morality is. It does not compromise. If he did, he would first have to strike out everything he has written so far, starting with his absurd Prefaces. Assemble a jury of competent men: I maintain that a good second year student is superior to him in everything, even regarding the *dirty* question of courtesans.

The masterpieces of the French language are the school award speeches, and the academic speeches. Indeed, the instruction of youth is perhaps the finest practical expression of duty, and a good appreciation of the works of Voltaire (look up the word appreciation) is preferable to the works themselves. Naturally!

The best authors of novels and dramas would in the long run distort the famous idea of the good, if the teachers, conservatories of the just, did not steer the young and old generations on the path of honesty and hard work.

In its personal name, in spite of itself, I have come to deny, with an indomitable will and an iron tenacity, the hideous past of sniveling humanity. Yes: I want to proclaim beauty on a golden lyre, allow for the goitrous sadness and stupid pride that rots, at its source, the swampy poetry of this

century. I will trample underfoot the sour stanzas of skepticism, which have no reason to exist. Judgment, once subsumed within the imperious and resolute efflorescence of its energy, without hesitating for a second over the ridiculous uncertainties of a misplaced pity, as a prosecutor, fatefully, condemns them. Without weakening, we must constantly watch over purulent insomnia and atrabilious nightmares. I despise and loathe pride, and the infamous pleasures of irony, employed to extinguish and displace the accuracy of thought.

Some characters, excessively intelligent—there is no reason for you to invalidate them by palinodes of dubious taste—have thrown themselves headlong into the arms of evil. It was absinthe, tasty, I don't doubt, but deleterious, that morally killed the author of *Rolla*. Woe to those who are greedy! Scarcely has the English aristocrat reached middle age, before his harp breaks under the walls of Missolonghi, after having picked in his path only the flowers that hatch the opium of dismal annihilations.

Although greater than the ordinary geniuses, if there had been another poet of his time, endowed, like him, in similar doses, with an exceptional intelligence, and capable of presenting himself as his rival, he would have been the first to confess the futility of his efforts to produce disparate curses; and that good and good alone is deemed worthy, by everyone, to harness our esteem. The fact was that there was no one to gain advantage over him. That's what no one has noted. How strange! Even in leafing through the collections and books of his time, no critic ever thought of emphasizing the preceding rigorous syllogism. And even he who surpasses it did not need to have invented it. So filled were we with amazement and uneasiness, rather than reflective admiration, before works written in a treacherous hand, but which nevertheless revealed the imposing manifestations of a soul which does not belong to the vulgarians of men, and who found himself at ease in the final consequences of one of the two less obscure problems which interest non-solitary hearts: good and evil.

It is not given to anyone to approach the extremes, either in one direction or another. This explains why, while praising without any ulterior

motive, the marvelous intelligence of which he, one of the four or five beacons of humanity, manifests at every moment, one silently makes numerous reservations about the unjustifiable applications and use that he has knowingly made of it. He should not have wandered through Satanic domains.

The ferocious revolt of the Troppmanns, the Napoleons, the Papavonians, the Byrons, the Black Victorians and the Charlotte Cordays will be kept at bay by my severe gaze. I dismiss with a wave of my hand this great diverse group of criminals. I ask with a self-imposed slowness: Who do they think they are deceiving here? O jail birds! Soap bubbles! Gilded marionettes! Worn out strings! Let them approach the Konrads, the Manfreds, the Laras, the sailors who look like the Corsair, the Mephistopheles, the Werthers, the Don Juans, the Fausts, the Iagos, the Rodins, the Caligulas, the Caius, the Iridions, the shrews like Colomba, the Ahrimane, the Manichean manitous, smeared with brains, who drink the blood of their victims in the sacred pagodas of Hindustan, the serpent, the toad and the crocodile, beyond-normal divinities of ancient Egypt, the sorcerers and the demonic powers of the Middle Ages, the Prometheuses, the mythological Titans struck down by Jupiter, the Evil Gods vomited up by the primitive imagination of barbarous peoples—the whole noisy parade of cardboard devils. With the certainty of defeating them, I seize the weighty whip of indignation and concentration and await these monsters with a firm foot, as their foretold tamer.

There are struggling writers, dangerous jokers, farcical quadroons, dark mystifiers, real loonies, worthy of filling up the Psych Ward. Their cretinous heads, from which a tile has been removed, create gigantic ghosts, which sink instead of rise. Scabrous exercises; specious gymnastics. Grotesque hocus-pocus: away with you. Please, withdraw from my presence, fabricators, by the dozen, of forbidden puzzles, whose frivolous trick solutions I did not see until today. Pathological case of a formidable egoism. Fantastic automatons: point out, one to the other, my children, the epithet that puts them in their place.

If they existed somewhere under the plastic reality, they would, in spite of their proven but deceitful intelligence, bring shame, through opprobrium and gall, on the planets they would inhabit. Imagine them, for a moment, gathered in society side-by-side like substance. It is an uninterrupted succession of fights, of which bulldogs, forbidden in France, and sharks and the macrocephalous whales will not dream. They are torrents of blood, in these chaotic regions full of hydras and minotaurs, and from which the wholly-frightened dove flees with a rush. It is a heap of apocalyptic beasts, which do not ignore what they do. They are clashes of passions, irreconcilabilities and ambitions, through the screams of a pride that does not let itself be read, contains itself, and of which nobody can, even approximately, fathom the reefs and the shallows.

But they will not impose upon me any longer. To suffer is a weakness, when one can prevent it and do something better. To exhale the sufferings of an unbalanced splendor, it is to provide proof, oh moribund ones of the perverse maremmas! Still less resistance and courage. With my voice and my solemnity of past great days, I call you back in my deserted foyers, glorious hope. Come and sit by my side, wrapped in the mantle of illusions, on the rational tripod of appeasements. Like a piece of junk furniture, I cast you out of my home, with a whip with scorpion lashes. If, by returning to my house you wish me to be persuaded that you forgot the sorrows which, under the rubric of repentances, I once caused you, then damn it, bring back with you that sublime procession—listen to me, I'm fainting!—the offended virtues, and their imperishable rectifications.

I note, with bitterness, that there are not more than a few drops of blood in the arteries of our consumptive times. Since the odious and special whining, patented without guarantees, of the Jean-Jacques Rousseaus, of the Chateaubriands and of the diapered nannies like Obermann dolls, through the other poets who wallowed in the impure silt, until the dream of Jean-Paul, the suicide of Dolores de Veintemilla, the Raven of Allan, the Infernal Comedy of the Pole, the bloody eyes of Zorilla, and the immortal cancer, A Carcass, which the morbid lover of the Hottentot

Venus once painted with affection, the improbable pains that this century has created for itself, in their monotonous and disgusting will, have made it consumptive. Absorbing larvae in their unbearable numbness!

Music, get along.

Yes, good people, it is I who order you to burn, on a red-hot shovel with a little yellow sugar, the duck of doubt, with lips of vermouth, which, spreads in a melancholic fight between good and evil. Tears, which need to be pumped since they do not come from the heart, create everywhere, the universal vacuum. This is the best that you can do.

Despair, feeding with bias on its phantasmagoria, imperturbably leads the writer to the mass abrogation of divine and social laws, and to theoretical and practical wickedness. In a word, makes the human behind predominate in argumentative reasoning. Come on, my turn to have a word! One becomes wicked, I repeat, and one's eyes take on the color of those condemned to death. I will not withdraw my proposition. I want my poetry to be able to be read by a fourteen-year-old girl.

Real suffering is incompatible with hope. However great this suffering, hope rises it a hundred cubits higher still. So leave me alone with the searchers. Down with the paws, down with comical bitches, the show-offs, the posers! What suffers, what dissects the mysteries that surround us, does not hope. Poetry that discusses necessary truths is less beautiful than poetry that does not discuss them. Excessive indecision, misused talent, waste of time: nothing will be easier to verify.

Singing of Adamastor, Jocelyn, Rocambole is childish. It isn’t because the author hopes that the reader will infer that he will forgive his rogue heroes, that he betrays himself and relies on good to erase the description of evil. It is in the name of these same virtues that Frank ignored, that we are willing to put up with him, O mountebanks of incurable illnesses.

Don't be like those shameless explorers of melancholy, magnificent in their own eyes, who

discover unknown things in their minds and bodies!

Melancholy and sadness are already the beginning of doubt; doubt is the beginning of despair; despair is the cruel beginning of the different degrees of wickedness. To convince yourself of this, read de Musset's *Confession of a Child of the Century*. The slope is fatal, once you get on it. It is certain that one arrives at wickedness. Beware of the slope. Root out the evil. Do not flatter the worship of adjectives such as indescribable, inenarrable, gleaming, incomparable, colossal, which shamelessly lie to the nouns they disfigure: they are pursued by lechery.

Second-order intelligences, like Alfred de Musset, can reluctantly push one or two of their faculties much further than the corresponding faculties of first-order intelligences, Lamartine, Hugo. We are witnessing the derailment of an overworked locomotive. It is a nightmare that holds the pen. Learn that the soul is made up of twenty faculties. Tell me about those beggars who don a grandiose hat, while dressed in sordid rags!

Here is a means of ascertaining the inferiority of Musset to other poets. Read aloud to a young girl, *Rolla* or *Night Thoughts*, Cobb's *Fools,* or the portraits of Gwynplaine and Dea, or Euripides' speech of Theramenes translated into French verse by Racine *père*. She shudders, frowns, raises and lowers her hands, aimlessly, like a drowning man; the eyes will cast greenish gleams. Read her Hugo's *Prayer for All.* The effects are diametrically opposed. The kind of electricity is no longer the same. She laughs out loud, asks for more.

From Hugo, only the poems about children will remain; the rest contains a lot of bad stuff.

Paul et Virginie shocks our deepest aspirations to happiness. In the past, this episode that broods from the first to the last page, especially the shipwreck at the end, made me cringe. I was rolling on the mat and kicking my wooden horse. The description of pain is an absurdity. You have to make everything look good. If this story were told in a simple biography, I would not attack it. It immediately changes character. Misfortune becomes august by the impenetrable will of God who created it. But man must not create

misfortune in his books. It is wanting, at all costs, to consider only one side of things. O maniacal howlers that you are!

Do not deny the immortality of the soul, the wisdom of God, the greatness of life, the order that manifests in the universe, bodily beauty, love of family, marriage, social institutions. Push aside the hackneyed writers: Sand, Balzac, Alexandre Dumas, Musset, Du Terrail, Féval, Flaubert, Baudelaire, Leconte and the *Smithies' Strike*!

Transmit to those who read you only the experience which emerges from pain, and which is no longer pain itself. Don't cry in public.

One must know how to snatch literary beauties even from the bosom of death; but these beauties will not belong to death. Death is only the occasional cause here. It is not the means, it is the end, which is not death.

The immutable and necessary truths, which bolster the glory of nations, and which doubt strives to shake, began ages ago. These are things that should not be touched. Those who want to create anarchy in literature, under the pretext of a new one, fall in the wrong direction. We dare not attack God; the immortality of the soul is attacked. But the immortality of the soul, too, is as old as the foundations of the world. What other belief will replace it, if it needs to be replaced? It will not always be negated.

If one remembers the truth from which all others flow, the absolute goodness of God and his absolute ignorance of evil, sophisms will collapse of themselves. At such a time, the unpoetic literature that relied on them will collapse. Any literature that discusses eternal axioms is condemned to live on its own. It is unfair. It devours its own liver. The *Verba norissima* makes sniveling school kids without handkerchiefs smile superbly. We have no right to question the Creator about anything.

If you are unhappy, do not tell the reader. Keep that to yourself.

If sophisms were corrected in the sense of the truths corresponding to these sophisms, it is only the correction that would be true; accordingly, the piece thus altered would have the right not to be

called false. The rest would be untrue, with a trace of falsity, and inevitably and consequently null and void.

Personal poetry has had its day of relative juggling and contingent contortions. Let us resume the indestructible thread of impersonal poetry, abruptly interrupted since the birth of the failed philosopher of Ferney, since the miscarriage of the great Voltaire.

It seems beautiful, sublime, under the pretext of humility or pride, to discuss final causes, to falsify stable and known consequences. Think again, because there is nothing more foolish! Let us renew the regular link with times gone by; poetry is geometry par excellence. Since Racine, poetry has not progressed a millimeter. It has gone backwards. Thanks to whom? to the Big Soft-Heads of our time. Thanks to the little sissies, Chateaubriand, the Melancholy Mohican; Sénancourt, the Man-in-Petticoat; Jean-Jacques Rousseau, the Socialist-Grump; Anne Radcliffe, the Ghost-Crazy; Edgar Allan Poe, the Mameluke-of-Alcohol Deliriums; Mathurin, the Handmaiden of Darkness; Georges Sand, the Circumcised Hermaphrodite; Théophile Gautier, the Incomparable Grocer; Leconte, the Captive-of-the-Devil; Goethe, the Suicide-for-Tears; Sainte-Beuve, the Suicide-for-Laughs; Lamartine, the Tearful Stork; Lermontov, the Roaring Tiger; Victor Hugo, the Funereal Green Stake; Misçkiéwicz, the Imitator-of-Satan; Musset, the Preening-Shirtless-Intellectual-; and Byron, the Hippopotamus-of-the-Infernal-Jungles.

Doubt has always existed in the minority. In this century, it is in the majority. We breathe violation of duty through our pores. It only happened once; it won't happen again.

The notions of simple reason are so obscured these days that the first thing teachers do when they teach their students to write Latin verse, young poets whose lips are still moistened with their mother's milk, is to reveal to them by practice the name of Alfred de Musset. In asking you a little, I ask a lot! The teachers of first-year students, therefore, give their classes two bloody Musset episodes to be translated into Greek verse. The first is the repulsive pelican comparison. The second, the terrible catastrophe befalling a laborer.

Why look at evil? Isn't it in the minority? Why twist a high school student's mind over issues that, because they could not be understood, have caused men like Pascal and Byron to lose theirs?

A student told me that his teacher had given his class, day by day, these two corpses to translate into Hebrew verse. These blights of animal and human nature made him so ill that he spent a month in the infirmary. As we knew each other, he sent for me through his mother. He told me, albeit naively, that his nights were troubled by lingering dreams. He thought he saw an army of pelicans crashing down on his chest and tearing it apart. They then flew to a burning cottage. They ate the laborer's wife and children. His body blackened with burns, the laborer came out of the house and engaged in a frightful battle with the pelicans. They then rushed into the cottage, which tumbled down. From the heaving mass of rubble—this never failed—he saw his teacher come out, holding his heart in one hand, in the other a sheet of paper on which one could decipher, in lines of sulfur, the passages about the pelican and the laborer, just as Musset himself composed them. It was not easy, at first sight, to predict his kind of illness. I told him to keep quiet, and not to talk about it to anyone, especially his teacher. I advised his mother to take him home for a few days, assuring her that he would recover. In fact, I took care to come round every day for a few hours, and his illness did pass.

Criticism must attack the form, never the substance of your ideas, your sentences. Settle it.

Feelings are the most incomplete form of reasoning imaginable.

All the water in the ocean would not be enough to wash away a bloodstain on the intelligence.

POETRY II

Genius guarantees the faculties of the heart.

Man is no less immortal than the soul.

Great thoughts come from reason!

Brotherhood is not a myth.

Newborns know nothing of life, not even its greatness.

In misfortune, friends increase.

Abandon all despair, you who enter here.

Goodness, your name is man.

It is here that the wisdom of nations dwells.

Every time I read Shakespeare, I feel like I ripped out a jaguar's brains.

I will write my thoughts with order, by design without confusion. If they are right, the first will follow naturally from the others. This is the real order. It marks my object with calligraphic disorder. I would dishonor myself too much if I did not treat my proposition with order. I want to show what it's capable of doing.

I do not accept evil. Man is perfect. The soul does not collapse. Progress exists. Good is irreducible. Antichrists, accusing angels, eternal punishment, religions are the product of doubt.

Dante, Milton, hypothetically describing infernal landscapes, proved that they were hyenas of the first kind. The proof is excellent. The result is bad. Their works should not be bought.

Man is an oak. There is nothing stronger in Nature. The universe need not arm itself to defend him. A drop of water is not enough to preserve him. Even if the universe should defend him, his disgrace would not be greater than that which does not preserve him. Man knows that his kingdom has no death, that the universe has a beginning. The universe knows nothing: at most, it is a thinking reed.

I imagine Elohim to be cold rather than sentimental.

The love of a woman is incompatible with the love of humanity. Imperfection must be rejected. Nothing is more imperfect than mutual selfishness. Life abounds with distrust, recriminations, oaths written in dust. It is not any more the lover of Chimène; it is the lover of Graziella. It is no longer Petrarch; it is Alfred de Musset. While nearing death, a rock-strewn shore, an unspecified lake, the forest of Fontainebleau, the Island of Ischia, a study comprising a raven, a burning room with a crucifix, a cemetery where appears the love object in the rays of a moon which ends up becoming a bore, stanzas where a group of nameless girls come to stroll in turn, revealing the measure of the author, allowing regrets to be heard. In both cases, dignity is nowhere to be found.

The erroneous makes a painful story.

The hymns to Elohim accustom vanity not to deal with earthly things. Such is the collection of hymns. They discourage humanity to count on the writer. It forsakes him. It calls him mystic, eagle, perjurer of his mission. You are not the sought-after dove.

A pawn could curtail literary baggage by saying the opposite of what the poets of this century have said. He would replace their affirmations by negations. Reciprocally. If it is ridiculous to attack the first principles, it is more ridiculous to defend them against these same attacks. I will not defend them.

Sleep is a reward for some, a torment for others. For all, it is a sanction.

If Cleopatra's morals hadn't been so loose, the face of the earth would have changed. Her nose would not have been longer.

Hidden actions are the most estimable. When I see so many of them in history, I like them a lot. They have not been completely hidden. They were known. This slightness, by which they appeared, increases their merit. It is most beautiful that they weren't able to be concealed.

The charm of death exists only for the brave.

Man is so great, that his greatness appears especially in that he does not want to know about his own misery. A tree does not know itself as

great. To be great is to know oneself as great. To be great is not wanting to know oneself as miserable. His greatness refutes these miseries. Greatness of a king.

When I write my thoughts, they do not escape me. This action makes me remember my strength that I can forget at any moment. I learn in proportion to my chained thought. I tend only to know the contradiction of my spirit with nothingness.

The heart of the man is a book that I have learned to value.

Not imperfect, not fallen, man is no longer the great mystery.

I do not allow anyone, not even Elohim, to doubt my sincerity.

We are free to do good.

Judgment is infallible.

We are not free to do evil.

Man is the conqueror of chimeras, the novelty of tomorrow, the regularity that makes chaos groan, the subject of conciliation. He judges all things.

He is not a fool. He is not an earthworm. He is the repository of truth, the keeper of certainty, the glory of the universe, not its scum. If he acts humbly, I praise him. If he boasts, I boast more. I reconcile him. He manages to understand that he is the sister of the angel.

Nothing is incomprehensible.

Thought is as clear as crystal. In speaking of long-term effects, religion, whose lies rely on it, can obscure it momentarily. In speaking of short-lived effects, an assassination of eight people at the gates of a city will bother it—that is certain—until the destruction of evil. Thought does not take long to regain its clarity.

Poetry must aim at practical truth. It states the relationship that exists between the first principles and the secondary truths of life. Everything stays in its place. The mission of poetry is difficult. It does not meddle in political events, with the way a people is governed, does not allude to historical periods, coups d'etat, regicides, court intrigues. It does not speak of the struggles in which man engages, by exception, with himself, with his

passions. It discovers the laws which give life to theoretical politics, universal peace, the refutations of Machiavelli, the cornets in which Proudhon wraps his works, the psychology of humanity. A poet must be more useful than any citizen of his tribe. His work is the code of diplomats, legislators, instructors of youth. We are far from the Homers, the Virgils, the Klopstocks, the Camoëns, the emancipated imaginations, the fabricators of odes, the merchants of epigrams against the divinity. Let's go back to Confucius, to Buddha, to Socrates, to Jesus Christ, moralists who roamed the villages suffering from hunger! Henceforth we must reckon with reason, which operates only on the faculties that preside over the category of phenomena of pure goodness.

Nothing is more natural than to read the *Discourse on Method* after having read Bérénice. Nothing is less natural than to read the *Treatise on Induction* by Biéchy, *The Problem of Evil* by Naville, after having read *Leaves of Autumn* and *Contemplations*. The transition is lost. The mind kicks back against the scrap, mystagogy. The heart is bewildered by these pages that a puppet scribbled. This violence enlightens him. He closes the book. He sheds a tear in memory of wild authors. Contemporary poets have abused their intelligence. The philosophers have not abused theirs. The memory of the former will fade away. The latter are classic.

Racine, Corneille, would have been capable of composing the works of Descartes, Malebranche, and Bacon. The soul of the former is one with that of the latter. Lamartine, Hugo, would not have been able to compose the *Treatise on Intelligence*. The soul of its author is not adequate to that of the former. Fatuity has caused them to lose their central qualities. Lamartine and Hugo, although superior to Taine, like him possess only—it is painful to admit—secondary faculties.

Tragedies arouse pity, terror, through duty. It's something. It's bad. It's not so bad as modern lyricism. Legouvé's *Medea* is preferable to the collection of works by Byron, Capendu, Zaccone, Félix, Gagne, Gaboriau, Lacordaire, Sardou, Goethe, Ravignan, Charles Diguet. Which writer among you, I pray, can raise—what is it? What are these sniffles of resistance? The weight of the *Monologue of Augustus*! Hugo's barbaric vaudevilles

do not proclaim duty. The melodramas of Racine, of Corneille, the novels of La Calprenède do proclaim it. Lamartine is not capable of composing Pradon's *Phèdre*; Hugo, Rotrou's *Wenceslas*; Sainte-Beuve, the tragedies of Laharpe, of Marmontel. Musset is capable of writing proverbs. Tragedy is an involuntary error, admits the struggle, is the first step of good, will not appear in this work. It retains its prestige. It is not the same with sophism—after-the fact metaphysical Gongorism of the self-parodists of my heroic-burlesque time.

The principle of worship is pride. It is ridiculous to address the word to Elohim, as did the Jobs, the Jeremiahs, the Davids, the Solomons, Turquety. Prayer is a wrongful act. The best way to please him is indirect, more in line with our strength. It consists in making our race happy. There are no two ways to please Elohim. The idea of good is one dimensional. Since what is good in less is also good in more, I shall cite the example of motherhood. To please his mother, a son will not loudly announce to her that she is wise, radiant, that he will behave in such a way as to deserve most of her praise. He does otherwise. Instead of saying it himself, he shows her by his actions, strips himself of that sadness which swells Newfoundland hounds. We must not confuse the goodness of Elohim with triviality. Each is plausible. Familiarity breeds contempt; reverence breeds the opposite. Work destroys the abuse of feelings.

No reasoner believes against his reason.

Faith is a natural virtue by which we accept the truths that Elohim reveals to us through conscience.

I know of no other blessing than that of being born. An impartial mind finds it complete.

Good is the victory over evil, the negation of evil. If one sings of good, evil is eliminated by this congruent act. I don't sing of what not to do. I sing what to do. The first does not contain the second. The second contains the first.

Youth listens to the advice of middle age. It has unlimited confidence in itself.

I know of no obstacle that surpasses the forces of the human mind, except truth.

The maxim does not need it to prove itself. Reasoning requires reasoning. The maxim is a law that contains a set of reasonings. A reasoning is completed as it approaches the maxim. Having become a maxim, its perfection rejects the proofs of metamorphosis.

Doubt is a tribute to hope. This is not a voluntary tribute. Hope would not consent to be only an homage.

Evil rises up against good. It can do no less.

It is a proof of friendship not to notice a chill increase in that of our friends.

Love is not happiness.

If we had no faults, we would not take so much pleasure in correcting ourselves, in praising in others what we lack.

Men who have made up their minds to hate their fellows ignore that they must begin by hating themselves.

Men who do not duel believe that men who duel to the death are brave.

How the turpitudes of the novel squat on the shelves! For a man who loses himself, as was another for a hundred sous piece, it sometimes seems as if one might kill a book.

Lamartine believed that the fall of an angel would become the Elevation of a Man. He was wrong to believe it.

To make evil serve the cause of good, I would say that the intention of the former is bad.

A banal truth contains more genius than the works of Dickens, Gustave Aymard, Victor Hugo, Landelle. With the latter, a child, surviving the universe, could not reconstruct the human soul. With the former, he could. I suppose he wouldn't discover, sooner or later, the definition of sophistry.

Words that express evil are meant to take on a meaning of usefulness. Ideas improve. The meaning of the words participates in it.

Plagiarism is necessary. Progress implies it. It closely squeezes an author's sentence, uses his expressions, erases a false idea, replaces it with the right idea.

A maxim, to be well made, does not need to be corrected. It needs to be developed.

As soon as dawn has appeared, the young girls go to pick roses. A current of innocence runs through the valleys, the capitals, helps the intelligence of the most enthusiastic poets, provides protections for cradles, crowns for youth, beliefs in immortality for the elderly.

I have seen men wear out moralists to lay bare their hearts, to pour down on them the blessing from on high. They meditated as much as possible, delighted the author of our felicitations. They respected childhood, old age, what breathes as well as what does not breathe, paid homage to women, upheld the modesty of the parts that the body reserves the right to name. The firmament, whose beauty I admit, the earth, image of my heart, were invoked by me, in order to signal out a man who did not believe himself to be virtuous.

The spectacle of this monster, if it had been realized, would not have made me die of astonishment: one dies for more than that. All this speaks for itself.

Reason and feeling advise each other, supplement each other. Whoever knows only one of the two, by renouncing the other, deprives himself of the totality of the aids which have been granted us for our guidance. Vauvenargues said "deprives himself of part of the aid."

Although his phrase and mine rest on the personifications of the soul in feeling, reason, the one I would choose at random would not be better than the other, even if I had created them. The one cannot be rejected by me. The other, Vauvenargues might find acceptable.

When a predecessor employs for good a word which belongs to evil, it is dangerous for his sentence to remain alongside the other. It is better to leave the evil-meaning word. To use a word that belongs to evil for good, one must have the right to do so. He who uses evil words which belong to good does not possess it. He is not

believed. No one would want to use Gérard de Nerval's string necktie.

The soul being one, one can introduce into discourse sensibility, intelligence, will, reason, imagination, memory.

I had spent a lot of time in the study of abstract sciences. The few people with whom I communicate were not the sort to dissuade me. When I began the study of man, I saw that these sciences are specific to him, and that by penetrating them, I remained closer than did others by ignoring them. I have forgiven them for not applying themselves to it! I didn't think I would find many companions in the study of man. It is his and his alone. I was deceived. There are more who study it than geometry.

We joyfully lose our lives, as long as we don't talk about it.

Passions diminish with age. Love, which should not be classed among the passions, diminishes in the same way. What it loses on one side, it gains on the other. It no longer guards so strictly the object of its vows; in doing justice to itself, expansion is accepted. The senses no longer have their sting to excite the sex organs of the flesh. The love of humanity begins. In these days when man feels that he is becoming an altar adorned with his virtues, and counts each pain that arises, the soul, in a recess of the heart where everything seems to be born, feels something that does not throb any longer. I'm speaking of memory.

The writer, without separating one from the other, can indicate the law that governs each of his poems.

Some philosophers are smarter than some poets. Spinoza, Malebranche, Aristotle, Plato are not Hégésippe Moreau, Malfilatre, Gilbert, André Chénier.

Faust, Manfred, Konrad are character types. They are not yet reasoning types. They are already agitator types.

Descriptions are a meadow, three rhinos, half a catafalque. They can be memory, prophecy. They are not the paragraph I am about to end.

The regulator of the soul is not the regulator of a soul. The regulator of a soul is the regulator of the soul, when these two species of souls are sufficiently confused to be able to affirm that a regulator is a regulator only in the imagination of a joking madman.

Phenomena pass. I seek laws.

There are men who are not types. Types are not men. We must not allow ourselves to be dominated by the accidental.

Judgments about poetry are worth more than poetry. They are the philosophy of poetry. Philosophy, thus understood, encompasses poetry. Poetry cannot do without philosophy. Philosophy can do without poetry. Racine is not capable of condensing his tragedies into precepts. A tragedy is not a precept. To one like-minded, a precept is a more intelligent action than a tragedy.

Put a quill pen in the hand of a moralist who is a first-rate writer. He will be superior to the poets.

The love of justice is, for most men, only the courage to suffer injustice.

Hide yourself away, War.

Feelings express happiness, make you smile. An analysis of feelings expresses happiness, and apart from any personality, makes you smile. The former elevates the soul, dependent on space and time, up to the conception of humanity, considered in itself, within its illustrious members. The latter raises the soul, independent of time and space, to the conception of humanity, considered in its highest expression: the will! The former deal with vices, virtues; the latter deals only with the virtues. Feelings do not know their marching order. The analysis of feelings teaches us how to make it known, increases the vigor of feelings. With the former, everything is uncertainty. They are the expression of happiness, pain, two extremes. With the latter, all is certainty. It is the expression of that happiness which results, at a given moment, from knowing how to restrain oneself, in the midst of good or bad passions. It uses its calm to fuse the description of these passions into a principle that circulates through the pages: the non-existence of evil. Feelings weep when they need to, do not, when there isn't need

to do so. The analysis of feelings does not weep. It possesses a latent sensibility, which catches people unawares, overcomes misery, learns to do without a guide, provides a weapon of combat. Feelings, the sign of weakness, are not feelings! The analysis of feelings, a mark of strength, engenders the most magnificent feelings I know. The writer who allows himself to be deceived by feelings should not be considered on a par with the writer who does not allow himself to be deceived either by feelings or by himself. Youth proposes sentimental rantings. Middle age begins to reason without trouble. He was only feeling, he thinks. He once let his feelings wander: here he gives them a pilot. If I consider humanity as a woman, I will not declare that her youth is on the decline, that her middle age is approaching. Her mind changes for the better. The ideal of her poetry will change. Tragedies, poems, elegies will no longer take precedence. The coldness of the maxim is primal! In Quinault's time, one would have been able to understand what I have just said. Thanks to a few gleams, scattered over the past few years, in journals and folios, I am capable of it myself. The style I am undertaking is as different from the style of moralists, who only note the evil, without indicating the remedy, as the latter is not from melodramas, funeral orations, odes, religious tracts. There is no feeling of struggles.

Elohim is made in the image of man.

Several certainties are contradicted. Many things that are wrong are uncontroversial. Contradiction is the mark of falsehood. Contradiction is the mark of certainty.

A philosophy for science exists. There is none for poetry. I do not know a moralist who is a poet of the first order. That's strange, someone will say.

It's a horrible thing to feel what you own is slipping away. We only become attached to it with the desire to find out if there is not something permanent about it.

Man is a subject devoid of errors. Everything shows him the truth. Nothing deceives him. The two principles of truth, reason and sense, while not lacking in sincerity, elucidate each other. The senses elucidate reason by their true appearances. This same service that they render, they receive

from it. Each takes its revenge. The phenomena of the soul pacify the senses, make impressions on them which I do not guarantee to be unfortunate. They don't lie. They are not deliberately mistaken.

Poetry should be made by all. Not by one. Poor Hugo! Poor Racine! Poor Coppée. Poor Corneille! Poor Boileau! Poor Scarron! Tics, tics, and tics.

Science has two ends that meet. The first is the ignorance in which men find themselves at birth. The second is that reached by great souls. They have explored what men can know, find that they know everything, meet in the same ignorance from which they started. It is a learned ignorance, which knows itself.

Those of them who, having come out of the first ignorance, have not been able to arrive at the other, but having some drops of this sufficient science, feel understood. These do not disturb the world, do not judge everything any worse than others. The people, the skillful, make up the bulk of a nation. Others, who respect it, are not less respected by it.

To know things, you don't have to know the details. Since details have an end point, our knowledge is solid.

Love does not confuse itself with poetry.

Woman is at my feet!

To describe heaven, one must not transport the materials of earth there. We must leave the earth, its materials, where they are, in order to embellish life with its ideal. To speak to Elohim on a personal level, to speak to him, is an inappropriate buffoonery. The best way to be grateful to him is not to whisper in his ear that he is powerful, that he created the world, that we are little worms compared to his greatness. He knows it better than we do. Men can dispense with informing him of that. The best way to be grateful to him is to console humanity, to bring everything back to it, to take it by the hand, to treat it as a brother. It's much truer.

To study order, one must not study disorder. Scientific experiments, like tragedies, stanzas to a sister, the rigmarole of misfortunes have no place here below.

Not all laws are worthy of mention.

To study evil, to bring out the good, is not to study the good in itself. Given a virtuous phenomenon, I will seek its cause.

Until now, misfortune has been described to inspire terror, pity. I will describe happiness to inspire their opposites.

A logic exists for poetry. It is not the same as that of philosophy. Philosophers are not as common as poets. Poets have the right to consider themselves above philosophers.

I don't need to worry about what I will do later. I need to do what I do. I don't need to discover now what things I will discover later. In the new science, each thing comes as it comes, such is its excellence.

There is something poetic about moralists and philosophers. The poets envelop the thinker. Each caste suspects the other, develops its qualities to the detriment of those which bring it closer to the other caste. The jealousy of the former does not want to admit that the poets are stronger than are they. The pride of the latter declares itself incompetent to do justice to more tender brains. Whatever the intelligence of a man, the process of thinking must be the same for all.

The existence of tics having been established, no one is surprised to see the same words recurring more often than not: in Lamartine, the tears that fall from his horse's nostrils, the color of his mother’s hair; in Hugo, shadows and the downtrodden are part of the binding.

The science that I undertake is a science distinct from poetry. I don't sing the latter. I strive to discover its source. Through the rudder that directs all poetic thought, billiard teachers will limn the development of sentimental theses.

The theorem is mocking by its nature. It is not indecent. The theorem does not ask to serve as an application. The application one makes of it demeans the theorem, makes itself indecent. Call the application the struggle against matter, against the ravages of the spirit.

To fight against evil is to honor it too much. If I allow men to despise it, let them be sure to say it's all I can do for them.

Man is certain not to be mistaken.

We are not satisfied with the life we have within us. We want to live in other people's idea of an imaginary life. We strive to appear as we are. We work to preserve this imaginary being, which is nothing other than the real one. If we have generosity, fidelity, we hasten not to let it be known, in order to attach these virtues to this being. We do not detach them from ourselves to join them to it. We are valiant to so earn a reputation for not being cowards. Sign of the capacity of our being not to be satisfied with one without the other, to renounce neither one nor the other. The man who did not live to preserve his virtue would be infamous.

Despite the sight of our greatness, which holds us by the throat, we have an instinct which corrects us, which we cannot repress, which elevates us!

Nature has perfections to show that she is the image of Elohim, defects to show that she is no less than his image.

It is good to obey laws. People understand what makes them righteous. We don't abandon them. When one makes their justice depend on something else, it is easy to make it doubtful. Peoples are not subject to revolt.

Those who are out of order tell those who are in order that they are the ones who strayed from nature. They believe they themselves are following it. You have to have a fixed point to judge. Where shall we not find this point in morality?

Nothing is less strange than the contradictions that we discover in man. He is made to know the truth. He is looking for it. When he tries to seize it, he dazzles himself, confuses himself in such a way that he gives no reason to dispute his possession of it. Some want to deprive man of the knowledge of truth, others want to assure him of it. Each employs motives so dissimilar that they destroy man’s self-containment. He has no other light than that which is in his nature.

We are born righteous. Everyone leans in to himself. It is towards order. You have to lean in to the general. Self-embrace is the end of all disorder, in war, in economy.

Men, having been able to recover from death, from misery, from ignorance, have taken it into their heads, in order to make themselves happy, not to think about them at all. It's all they could invent to console themselves for so few ills. A rich consolation. It's not going to heal evil. It hides it for a little while. By hiding it, it makes people think about curing it. By a legitimate reversal of the nature of man, it does not happen that boredom, which is its most profound evil, is his greatest good. It can contribute more than anything to make him seek his own healing. That is all. Diversion, which he regards as his greatest good, is his least evil. It brings him closer than anything else to seeking the remedy for his ills. Both are counter-proof of the misery, of the corruption of man, apart from his greatness. Man is bored, seeks this multitude of occupations. He has an idea of the happiness he has won; that which he finds in himself, he seeks in external things. He is content. Misfortune is neither in us nor in other creatures. It is in Elohim.

Since Nature makes us happy in all our states, our desires represent an unhappy state. To the state in which we are, they apply the afflictions of the state in which we are not. When we arrive at these afflictions, we won't be unhappy for them, as we would have been with other desires that conform to a new state.

The force of reason is more apparent in those who know it than in those who do not.

Our presumptuous are so slight that we would like to be known in the world, even to those folks who will come along when we are no longer present. Our vanity is so slight, that we are honored if five, let us say six people amuse us, hold us in esteem.

Little consoles us. Many things bother us.

Modesty is so natural in the heart of man that a workman is careful not to boast, wants to have his admirers. The philosophers want them. Especially the poets! Those who write for fame want the fame of having written well. Those who read it

want to have the glory of having read it. I, who am writing this, pride myself on having that desire. Those who read this will boast the same.

The inventions of men are increasing. The goodness, the malice of the world in general does not remain the same.

The greatest man's mind is not so dependent as to be disturbed by the slightest sound of the *Tintamarre*, which created the din around him. It doesn't take the silence of a cannon to stop his thoughts. You don't need the sound of a weather vane, a pulley. The fly does not reason well now. A man buzzes at his ears. That's enough to make it incapable of giving good advice. If I want it to be able to find the truth, I will drive out this animal which holds its reason in check, which disturbs such intelligence which controls kingdoms.

The object of these people who play tennis so mindfully, with such physical activity, is to boast with their friends that they have played better than another. This is the source of their attachment. Some are sweating in their closets to show scholars that they have solved a question of algebra which had not been solved until now. Others expose themselves to perils, in order to boast of a place they would have seized less spiritually, in my opinion. The latter kill themselves to note these things. It's not to become any less wise. It is above all to show that they know its solidity. These are the least stupid of the bunch. They are knowledgeable. One can think of others that they would not be, if they did not have this knowledge.

No one was made more chaste because of the example of Alexander's chastity; his drunkenness did not create abstainers. We are not ashamed of not being as virtuous as he was. We can believe we are not within the virtuousness of ordinary men, when we see ourselves in the virtues of these great men. We hold on to them by the end by which they hold on to the people. However important they are, they are united with the rest of men in some fashion. They are not suspended in air, separated from our society. If they loom above us, it is because their feet are held as high as ours. They are all on the same level, resting on the same

ground. By this extremity, they are as raised as are we, as children, a little more than animals.

The best way to persuade is not to persuade.

Despair is the smallest of our mistakes.

When a thought presents itself to us as a truth that roams the streets, when we take the trouble to develop it, we find that it is a discovery.

One can be just, if one is not human.

Youthful storms precede bright days.

Unconsciousness, dishonor, lechery, hatred and contempt for men are priced monetarily. Liberality multiplies the advantages of wealth.

Those who are honest in their pleasures are sincere in their business. It is the mark of a little fierce naturalness, when pleasure makes human.

The moderation of great men limits only their virtues.

It is offensive to humans to give them praise that widens the bounds of their merit. Many people are modest enough to suffer without needing to be appreciated.

We must expect everything, fear nothing of time, of men.

If merit or glory do not make men unhappy, what is called misfortune does not deserve their regrets. A soul deigns to accept fortune, repose, if they have to superimpose the vigor of its feelings, the rise of its genius.

One esteems great designs when one feels capable of great successes.

Reserve is the apprenticeship of mind.

We say solid things, when we are not trying to say extraordinary things.

Nothing is false that is true; nothing is true that is false. Everything is the opposite of a dream, of a lie.

We must not believe that what nature has made lovable is vicious. Not a century nor people have established virtues, imaginary vices.

The beauty of life can only be judged by that of death.

A playwright can give the word passion a useful meaning. He is no longer a playwright. A moralist gives any word a useful meaning. He is still a moralist!

Whoever looks at the life of a man finds there the history of his kind. Nothing could make it bad.

Must I write in verse to separate myself from other men? Let charity decide!

The pretext of those who make others happy is that they wish them well.

Generosity enjoys the happiness of others, as if it were responsible for it.

Order dominates in the human race. Reason and virtue are not the strongest there.

Princes create few ingrates. They give everything they can.

One can love with all one's heart those in whom one recognizes great faults. It would be impertinence to believe that imperfection alone has the right to please us. Our weaknesses bind us together as much as something that is not virtue could.

If our friends do us favors, we think that as friends they owe us. We don't think they owe us their enmity at all.

He who was born to rule, would rule even on the throne.

When duties have exhausted us, we believe we have exhausted duties. We say that everything can fill the heart of man.

Everything lives by action. From there comes communication of beings, harmony of the universe. This fruitful law of nature we find to be a vice in man. He is obliged to obey it. Unable to subsist in rest, we conclude that it is in its place.

We know what the sun and the heavens are. We have the secret of their movements. In the hand of Elohim, blind instrument, insensitive spring, the world attracts our homage. The revolutions of empires, the faces of the times, the nations, the conquerors of science, this comes from a creeping

atom which lasts only one day, destroys the spectacle of the universe in all ages.

There are more truths than errors, more good qualities than bad, more pleasures than pains. We like to control character. We rise above our own species. We are enriched by the consideration with which we showered on it. We believe that we cannot separate our interest from that of humanity, nor scandalize the species without compromising ourselves. This ridiculous vanity has filled books with hymns in favor of nature. Man is out of favor with those who think. It is a matter of who will burden him with fewer vices. When was he not on the point of rising up again, of having his virtues restored?

Nothing has been said. It is too soon since the more than seven thousand years that there have been men. In regard to morals, as with all else, the lesser good is held on high. We have the advantage of working after the ancients, the clever ones among the moderns.

We are susceptible to friendship, justice, compassion, reason. O my friends! what then is the absence of virtue?

Until my friends die, I won't talk about death.

We are appalled at our relapses, to see that our misfortunes have been able to correct us from our faults.

The beauty of death can only be judged by that of life.

The three terminating dots make me shrug in pity. Does one need that to prove that he is a thinking man, that is to say, an imbecile? As if clarity wasn't worth the vagueness, speaking of points!

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Compliments:

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Suggested further reading

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by

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